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United Nations

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Report of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Sixty-third session (1-5 October 2012)

General Assembly

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Sixty-seventh Session
Supplement No. 12A

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I. Introduction

A. Opening of the session

1. The Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme held its sixty-third plenary session at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, from 1 to 5 October 2012. It was opened by the Chairperson, His Excellency Ambassador Jan Knutsson (Sweden), who briefed the Committee on his recent mission to Niger. The Chairperson and the Vice-Chairperson, Her Excellency Ambassador Alicia Arango Olmos (Colombia), shared responsibility for presiding over the remainder of the session.

2. The Chairperson welcomed Azerbaijan and Rwanda, which were attending their first plenary session as members.

B. Representation on the Committee

3. The following members of the Committee were represented at the session:

Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belgium, Benin, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guinea, Holy See, Hungary, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Lesotho, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Mexico, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, Rwanda, Serbia, Slovenia, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United Republic of Tanzania, the United States of America, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Yemen and Zambia.

4. The Governments of the following States were present as observers:

Afghanistan, Angola, Armenia, Belarus, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, the Czech Republic, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Honduras, Indonesia, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liberia, Lithuania, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Monaco, Myanmar, Nepal, Niger, Oman, Panama, Peru, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Ukraine, Uruguay and Zimbabwe.

5. The European Union and Palestine were represented as observers.

6. Also present were the following intergovernmental organizations, specialized agencies and other entities:

African Union, Council of Europe, International Committee of the Red Cross, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, International Organization for Migration, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Organization for Islamic Cooperation, Sovereign Military Order of Malta, World Bank and World Health Organization.

7. The United Nations system was represented as follows:

United Nations Office at Geneva, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, United Nations Development Programme, UN-Women and the World Food Programme.

8. Twenty-seven non-governmental organizations attended.

C. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

9. The Executive Committee adopted by consensus the following agenda (A/AC.96/LXIII/1):

1. Opening of the session
2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters
3. Introductory statement by the High Commissioner
4. General debate
5. Consideration of reports on the work of the Standing Committee:
   (a) International protection
   (b) Programme budgets, management, financial control and administrative oversight
6. Consideration of reports relating to programme and administrative oversight and evaluation
7. Consideration and adoption of the Biennial Programme Budget 2012-2013 (revised)
8. Review of the Annual Consultations with non-governmental organizations
9. Other statements
10. Meetings of the Standing Committee in 2013 and other matters
11. Consideration of the provisional agenda of the sixty-fourth session of the Executive Committee
12. Election of officers
13. Any other business
14. Adoption of the report of the sixty-third session of the Executive Committee
15. Closing of the session

D. Election of officers for the sixty-fourth session

10. Under Rule 10 of its Rules of Procedure, the Committee elected the following officers by acclamation, to serve the Committee from the day immediately following their election to the end of the last day of the following annual plenary session:

Chairperson:	Her Excellency Ambassador Alicia Arango Olmos (Colombia)
Vice-Chairperson:	Deferred to an Extraordinary Meeting of the Executive Committee
Rapporteur:	Mr. Hassane Boukili (Morocco)

II. Work of the sixty-third session

11. As the basis for the general debate, the High Commissioner delivered an opening statement, the text of which is available on UNHCR's website (www.unhcr.org). Following the High Commissioner's statement, the guest speaker, the Executive Director of the World Food Programme, Ms. Ertharin Cousin, addressed the Executive Committee.

12. A summary of the general debate,[1] delivered by the Chairperson, is contained in annex II.

III. Decisions of the Executive Committee

A. General decision on administrative, financial and programme matters

13. *The Executive Committee*,

(a) *Recalls* that the Executive Committee at its sixty-second session approved a budget for 2012 covering total requirements of $3,591,184,500; *notes* that the additional needs under supplementary budgets in 2012 amount to $489,708,600; *approves* the total revised requirements for 2012 amounting to $4,052,560,400; and *authorizes* the High Commissioner, within these total appropriations, to effect adjustments in Regional Programmes, Global Programmes and Headquarters budgets;

(b) *Recalls* that the activities contained in the Biennial Programme Budget for the years 2012-2013, as set out in document A/AC.96/1100, and as revised in document A/AC.96/1112, are consistent with the Statute of the Office of the High Commissioner (General Assembly resolution 428 (V)); the High Commissioner's other functions as recognized, promoted or requested by the General Assembly, the Security Council, or the Secretary-General; and the relevant provisions of the Financial rules for voluntary funds administered by the High Commissioner for Refugees (A/AC.96/503/Rev.10);

(c) *Approves* the programmes and budgets for Regional Programmes, Global Programmes and Headquarters under the revised 2012-2013 Biennial Budget, as set out in document A/AC.96/1112 and amounting to $3,924,238,600 for 2013, including the United Nations Regular Budget contribution towards Headquarters costs, the Reserves and the Junior Professional Officer programme; and *authorizes*

[1] See summary records of the session for a full account of the deliberations of the Committee, including statements or other interventions by delegations under all agenda items, and their comments on the draft conclusion and decisions, as well as summing up and closing statements by the High Commissioner and by the Chairperson.

the High Commissioner, within this total appropriation, to effect adjustments in Regional Programmes, Global Programmes and Headquarters budgets;

(d) *Takes note of* the Report of the Board of Auditors to the General Assembly on the Accounts of the Voluntary Funds Administered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the year ended 31 December 2011 (A/AC.96/1111) and the Report by the High Commissioner on Main risk areas and Measures taken in response to the recommendations in the Report of the Board of Auditors (A/AC.96/1111/Add.1), as well as the Report by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on UNHCR's Biennial Programme Budget for 2012-2013 (revised) (A/AC.96/1112/Add.1) and the various reports of the High Commissioner related to oversight activities (A/AC.96/1113 and A/AC.96/1114); and *requests* to be kept regularly informed on the measures taken to address the recommendations and the observations raised in these various oversight documents;

(e) *Requests* the High Commissioner, within the resources available, to respond flexibly and efficiently to the needs indicated under the revised Biennial Programme Budget for the years 2012-2013, and *authorizes* him, in the case of additional emergency needs that cannot be met fully from the Operational Reserve, to create supplementary budgets and issue Special Appeals under all pillars, with such adjustments being reported to the subsequent Standing Committee for consideration;

(f) *Acknowledges* with appreciation the burden that continues to be shouldered by developing and least developed countries hosting refugees; and *urges* Member States to recognize this valuable contribution to the protection of refugees and to participate in efforts to promote durable solutions; *and*

(g) *Urges* Member States, in the light of the extensive needs to be addressed by the Office of the High Commissioner, and in parallel with the long-standing and substantial support provided by refugee-hosting countries, to respond generously and in a spirit of solidarity, to his appeal for resources to meet in full the 2012-2013 Biennial Programme Budget (revised); and to ensure that the Office is resourced in a timely and predictable manner, while keeping "earmarking" to a minimum level.

B. Decision on the programme of work of the Standing Committee in 2013

14. *The Executive Committee*,

Having reviewed the issues before it at its sixty-third session, and bearing in mind the decisions adopted at that session,

(a) *Decides* to convene no more than three formal meetings of the Standing Committee in 2013, to be held in March, June and September;

(b) *Reaffirms* its decision on the framework for the Standing Committee's programme of work (A/AC.96/1003, paragraph 25, subparagraph 2 (c)); authorizes the Standing Committee to add and delete items, if appropriate, to this framework for its meetings in 2013; and requests member States to meet in December 2012 to draw up a detailed workplan for formal adoption by the Standing Committee at its first meeting in 2013;

(c) *Calls upon* its members to continue efforts to ensure that debate at the Executive Committee and its Standing Committee be of a substantive and interactive nature, yielding practical guidance and clear advice to the High Commissioner, in keeping with the Committee's statutory functions; and *calls upon* the Office of the High Commissioner to be explicit and analytical in its reports and presentations to the Committee and to submit documentation in a timely manner;

(d) *Further requests* the Standing Committee to report on its work to the sixty-fourth session of the Executive Committee.

C. Decision on observer participation in meetings of the Standing Committee in 2012-2013

15. *The Executive Committee*,

(a) *Approves* applications by the following Government observer delegations for participation in meetings of the Standing Committee from October 2012 to October 2013:

Albania, Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Czech Republic (the), Iraq, Latvia, Lithuania, Malaysia, Nepal, Slovakia and Uruguay;

(b) *Authorizes* the Standing Committee to decide upon any additional applications from Government observer delegations to participate in its meetings during the aforementioned period;

(c) *Approves* the following list of intergovernmental and international organizations to be invited by the High Commissioner to participate as observers in relevant meetings of its Standing Committee from October 2012 to October 2013:

United Nations specialized agencies, departments, funds and programmes, African Union, Council of Europe, East African Community, Economic Community of Central African States, Economic Community of West African States, European Union, Executive Secretariat of the Commonwealth of Independent States, Intergovernmental Authority on Development, International Centre for Migration Policy Development, International Committee of the Red Cross, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, International Organization for Migration, League of Arab States, Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, International Organisation of "la Francophonie", Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Southern African Development Community and Sovereign Military Order of Malta.

D. Decision on extending the input in the work of the Executive Committee from non-governmental organizations

16. *The Executive Committee*,

Recalling the decision it took at its forty-sixth session on the Working Methods of the Executive Committee and its Standing Committee (A/AC.96/860, para. 32), the decisions taken by the Standing Committee at its eighth meeting (A/AC.96/888), and the decisions taken by the Executive Committee at its forty-

eighth, forty-ninth, fiftieth, fifty-first, fifty-fourth, fifty-fifth and fifty-eighth sessions,

Recalling also its "Decision on extending the input in the work of the Executive Committee from non-governmental organizations" (NGOs) (A/AC.96/1048), and in particular paragraph 19 (a), calling for informal consultations to pursue consideration of further options for extending NGO participation,

Having examined the issue in depth at the informal consultative meeting on extending the input of NGOs in the work of the Executive Committee, which took place in Geneva, on 3 April 2012,

(a) *Emphasizes* the governance role of the Executive Committee, and stresses the importance of maintaining the inter-governmental character of the Committee's decision-making processes, the well-established tradition of working by consensus, and the efficiency of the working methods;

(b) *Recognizes* the vital contribution of NGOs in UNHCR's operations around the world, the important nature of their consultative role, and the value of their input in enriching discussions within areas of their expertise;

(c) *Acknowledges* the frank discussions that have taken place with NGOs on extending their input as observers in the work of the Executive Committee and the Standing Committee;

(d) *Reaffirms* the provisions related to NGO observer participation in the related decisions of the Executive Committee, and in this regard, *encourages* NGOs to make use of these provisions;

(e) *Noting* the lack of agreement on the options presented regarding extending the input in the work of the Executive Committee from NGOs with observer status, *decides* to continue discussion among Executive Committee members on this matter.

E. Decision on the provisional agenda of the sixty-fourth session of the Executive Committee

17. *The Executive Committee*,

Recalling its decision on working methods adopted at its fifty-fifth plenary session (A/AC.96/1003, para. 25);

Decides to adopt as the provisional agenda for the sixty-fourth session of the Executive Committee the standard model contained in subparagraph 1 (f) of the above-mentioned decision.

Annex I

List of decisions adopted by the Standing Committee in 2012

In accordance with the authority vested in it by the Executive Committee, the Standing Committee adopted a number of decisions which are annexed to the reports of the different Standing Committee meetings, as follows:

(a) *Report of the fifty-third meeting of the Standing Committee (A/AC.96/1109)*

- Decision on budgets and funding in 2012
- Decision on UNHCR's programme in the United Nations proposed strategic framework for the period 2014-2015

(b) *Report of the fifty-fourth meeting of the Standing Committee (A/AC.96/1116)*

- Decision on budgets and funding for 2011 and 2012

(c) *Report of the fifty-fifth meeting of the Standing Committee (A/AC.96/1117)*

- Decision on overall budgets and funding for 2012

Annex II

Chairperson's summary of the general debate

The Chairperson summarized the general debate of the 63rd session of the Executive Committee as follows:

Let me begin by thanking the High Commissioner and Ambassador Ertharin Cousin, Executive Director of the World Food Programme, for their rich and stimulating presentations. These laid the groundwork for what I believe has been a very productive General Debate at our 63rd Session.

Ms. Cousin emphasized a theme that many of you reinforced during your own statements — the importance of partnership and cooperation to "get things right," strengthen resilience and better serve vulnerable populations and their host communities.

The High Commissioner's informative statement reminded us of the changing and increasingly complex environment within which UNHCR operates and UNHCR's consequent need to be flexible. After the High Commissioner expressed his gratitude to those countries who have generously opened their borders to welcome refugees, despite the economic and social hardships this may cause, and paid tribute to those staff members of UNHCR and its partners who have lost their lives in humanitarian service, he outlined a number of steps the Office is taking to adapt to the changing landscape. These include cooperative efforts with other UN agencies, such as through the Transformative Agenda and the Transitional Solutions Initiative; institutional reforms to strengthen financial management, efficiency and accountability; improvements in emergency response capacity and security measures for both staff and beneficiaries, especially in the area of sexual and gender-based violence; and other initiatives, such as a new education strategy for 2012-2016, new detention guidelines, improving access to refugees in urban settings, and the upcoming High Commissioner's Dialogue on faith and protection. Nevertheless, UNHCR's primary goals remain promoting protection and searching for durable solutions.

Your interventions underscored many of the High Commissioner's remarks. You expressed concern about the increasing number of emergencies and the more complex challenges facing the humanitarian community. You also paid tribute to UNHCR staff and the generosity of host countries, especially those who have been affected by crises in the Sahel, the Syrian Arab Republic, Sudan and South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, and Afghanistan. A number of you described your governments' efforts to help refugees and asylum-seekers, despite the heavy burden this presents, and many of you cited the importance of international solidarity and burden-sharing to help address these situations. After all, as one delegation pointed out, refugees are hosted by an affected country on behalf of the entire international community.

A number of delegations reiterated the continuing importance of the Refugee Conventions and the Conventions on Statelessness that were the subject of last year's ministerial event. Some delegations noted the importance of fulfilling the pledges made at the event, and even more of you described real progress in fulfilling those pledges, in some cases through ratification of the Stateless Conventions or through the adoption of appropriate legislation to address the issue of statelessness. Also, with regard to the Refugee Convention and UNHCR's mandate, several

speakers reiterated the importance of non-refoulement and the need to maintain the integrity of the asylum system.

Delegations stressed the importance of UNHCR's partnerships and cooperation with a wide range of actors including national governments, intergovernmental organizations, regional organizations, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector and civil society. In particular, speakers called for continued cooperation with the Emergency Relief Coordinator, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), especially in implementing and mainstreaming the Transformative Agenda, and also cooperation with development actors including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank through the Transitional Solutions Initiative. At the same time UNHCR was urged to engage with States on these initiatives. UNHCR was also praised for its lead of the protection cluster in situations of internal displacement but encouraged to coordinate more with other clusters and to provide highly qualified candidates for the Humanitarian Coordinator pool.

Many delegations expressed support for UNHCR's continued efforts to find durable solutions, especially for protracted situations, emphasizing that while voluntary repatriation remains the preferred solution, resettlement opportunities should be expanded. Several delegations described their efforts in this regard, and UNHCR was encouraged to consider complementary approaches, such as temporary protection, when necessary, but without abandoning its commitment to the three core durable solutions.

Funding was, naturally, a major concern. Many delegations called for donors to fill the funding gaps for current crises as well as to provide support to host countries that bear significant financial burdens. Some delegations called for increased funding, especially to address protracted situations. Support was also expressed for UNHCR's efforts to broaden the donor base, especially with the private sector, and seek more unearmarked funding.

There was strong support expressed for the institutional reforms and initiatives that UNHCR has been undertaking in recent years. UNHCR was encouraged to follow the recommendations of the United Nations Board of Auditors to enhance accountability and transparency and improve management practices. The Office was also urged to continue with global needs assessments and efforts to enhance compliance and risk management, while also finding a way to provide results-based reporting.

Delegations supported initiatives such as the new education strategy for 2012-2016, new detention guidelines, implementation of the decision of the Secretary-General's Policy Committee on durable solutions, and efforts to improve food security and nutrition. In particular, several delegations welcomed UNHCR's increased cooperation with UN-Women and efforts to empower women, address sexual and gender-based violence, and enhance security measures for staff and vulnerable populations. One delegation called for the Office to play a more active role in the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

Many delegations, too numerous to single out, described efforts their governments were making to improve the situation of refugees and asylum-seekers, and in some cases stateless persons, through cooperation with UNHCR, new legislative

measures, or improvements in the provision of basic services. These are welcome statements. In this regard, several delegations expressed their gratitude for visits to their countries undertaken by the High Commissioner or other UNHCR senior management.

These efforts, by so many governments, underscore a common theme throughout our discussions: if the root causes of conflict are to be addressed, it will take a holistic approach and a collective, multilateral effort on the part of humanitarian agencies, Member States, NGOs and others. I would like to conclude now, and close the general debate, by recalling the words of the High Commissioner: "We live in dangerous times, in an unpredictable world. More and more people are forced to flee in search of refuge. I urge all ExCom members to renew their collective commitment to addressing their plight, and the plight of all those who find themselves uprooted from their homes and communities, as the crises of today and tomorrow continue to unfold."

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